



CALL: Irish Journal for Culture, Arts, Literature and Language

Volume 1
Issue 1 *Language, Migration and Diaspora*

Article 3

2016

"*Diaspora* is a Greek word: Words by Greeks on the Diaspora"

Marina Frangos

Hellenic Open University, marina.frangos@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/priamls>



Part of the [European Languages and Societies Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Frangos, Marina (2016) "'*Diaspora* is a Greek word: Words by Greeks on the Diaspora'," *CALL: Irish Journal for Culture, Arts, Literature and Language*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 3.

doi:10.21427/D7QG6T

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/priamls/vol1/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals Published Through Arrow at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in CALL: Irish Journal for Culture, Arts, Literature and Language by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact yvonne.desmond@tudublin.ie, arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, brian.widdis@tudublin.ie.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 License](#)



“*Diaspora* is a Greek word: Words by Greeks on the Diaspora”

Marina Frangos

Hellenic Open University, Greece
marina.frangos@gmail.com

Abstract

The article explores the different types of the Greek Diaspora in the past 150 years and how these different types are identified in literary production. Following global diasporas’ theory and particularly Robin Cohen’s typology of victim, labour, trade, cultural and imperial diasporas, various literary works are cited by writers of Greek heritage from different countries to determine whether these different types of diaspora have been represented and presented to a global audience. The article adds to a better understanding of global migrant literature. Writers cited include Elia Kazan, Pulitzer-prize winner Greek American Jeffrey Eugenides and Australia’s Christos Tsiolkas.

Keywords: diaspora, migration, migrant literature, trauma, Greek diaspora, genocide, multiculturalism

The idea of diaspora varies greatly. It can often be thought of as an evolutionary stage of migration. Where there is diaspora, there must be migration, although not all types of migrations constitute diasporas. Among the many diaspora scholars from a multitude of academic disciplines, Robin Cohen can rightly be considered one of the founding figures of contemporary diaspora studies. In perhaps his most influential work, *Global Diasporas*, Cohen analysed the relationship between identity and migration. Through the use of typologies, comparisons and suggestive lists of shared characteristics, Cohen was able to employ the ancient concept of diaspora to enrich the study of present-day transnational migrant flows.

Cohen identified five main types of diasporas, namely *victim, imperial, trade, labour and cultural* diasporas: *Victim diasporas* are seen to be born of flight rather than choice; mass displacements are caused by wars, ethnic cleansing, pogroms and the like. A scarring historical event – Babylon for the Jews, slavery for the Africans, famine for the Irish, genocide for the Armenians and the formation of the state of Israel for the Palestinians,

becomes the cause, but also the defining binding characteristic of the exiled community.¹ *Labour diasporas* are those created by migration for the purpose of work. The Italians who made the transatlantic crossing, mainly to the USA and Argentina, in the late nineteenth century and early - twentieth century form a possible candidate for this group.² Diasporas may arise from dispersal in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions. The Chinese and the British are cited in Cohen's work as examples of trade and colonial diasporas. Cohen provides an example of the last of his diaspora types, that of a cultural diaspora (probably the most challenging in terms of its definition) with the case of the Caribbean peoples. Like the Jews and the Armenians, the Greeks are pre-eminently a diaspora people.³ And, although the Greek case appears in many collective works on diasporas, such as *The Penguin Atlas of Diasporas*, Cohen's typological survey makes no reference to the Greeks, apart from a few lines on their ancient colonial past. There has been, admittedly, a tendency to trace the origins of the Greek diaspora to the ancient Greek colonies; however, other scholars have argued that diaspora, exile and immigration represent three successive phases in Modern Greek history.⁴ In any case, Cohen's typology raises questions as to which category best suits the Greek diasporic experience. In most cases, there is no perfect match between a particular ethnic group and a specific type of diaspora. This is particularly true in the case of the Greeks in recent history. Thus, it can be argued that the Greek case is a prototype case of a *mixed diaspora*,⁵ expressed through multiple forms: presently, there are Greek diaspora clusters that can be classified as victim, trade, labour and cultural diasporas, according to Cohen's typology.⁶

¹ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas - An Introduction*. London: UCL Press, 1997, p. 28.

² Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, p. 52.

³ Richard Clogg, *The Greek Diaspora in the Twentieth Century*, London: MacMillan, 1999, p. 1.

⁴ Dimitris Tziouvas, *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700: Society, Politics and Culture*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2009, p. 1.

⁵ Marina Frangos, *Human Geographies of the Greek Diaspora: a Typology of a Global Network* [in Greek], Mytilene, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, The University of the Aegean, 2009.

⁶ As the modern Greek state was not in any way a colonial power, it is impossible to speak of a Greek colonial diaspora.

Table 1: Main Greek Communities Abroad

[Greek government figures refer to those from the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad, an agency under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs]

COUNTRY	GREEK COMMUNITY (Government figures)	As a % of the population in host country	Other references
U.S.A.	3.000.000	1.11%	1,390,439 (U.S. Census 2009)
Australia	700.000	3.87%	365,120 (Australian census 2006)
Germany	360.000	0.43%	294,891 (Federal Statistics Office of Germany 2009]
Canada	350.000	1.18%	242,685 (2006 Canadian Census)
United Kingdom	220.000	0.38%	400,000 The Independent, April 3 2008
Ukraine	150.000	.29%	91.500 (Ukrainian Census 2001)
Russia	100.000	.067%	100.000 Russian Census 2002
Bulgaria	25.000	0.295%	
Brazil	25.000	0.015%	
Argentina	20.000	0.056%	
France	35.000	0.06%	
New Zealand	10.000	0.28%	
Georgia	50.000	.91%	
Belgium	25.000	0.25%	15.742 Ecodata-Belgian Statistics
Italy	21.000	0.04	
Sweden	20.000	0.23%	
Romania	14.000	0.06%	6.500 Recensamant Romania 2002
Switzerland	8.500	0.12%	
Austria	6.500	0.08%	
Holland	4.000	0.026%	
Poland	4.500	0.01%	
Hungary	2.500	0.02%	
Czech Republic	2.500	0.024%	
Armenia	5.000	0.13%	
Kazakhstan	25.000	0.15%	13.000 [Ethnographic situation in Kazakhstan]
Uzbekistan	10.000	0.044%	9.500 [Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst-2000]
Rep. of South Africa	50.000	0.13%	
Egypt	5.000	0.008%	
Zimbabwe	4.000	0.029%	

Studies on the Greek diaspora usually approach the issue from one of two viewpoints: either chronologically or geographically. In the first case, modern Greek migrations are generally classified into three large periods:⁷

- a. migrations from Greece during Ottoman rule (15th-19th centuries)
- b. migrations after the modern Greek state was established (1830) up to the end of WWII
- c. migrations after WWII.

In many other works, the Greek diaspora is categorised by destination country (or host country). These studies examine the history and development of Greek communities in different parts of the world, with the Greek American and Greek Australian community receiving much attention.

Literature and Diaspora

One could attempt to examine the mixed character of the Greek diaspora case through the exploration of the ways this diaspora is represented in fiction, travel writing, poetry, film and music. In the main, I will cite works of literature where the different types of the Greek diaspora –victim, labour, trade and cultural– are presented.

The body of literature that could be cited is extensive; in any case, what constitutes Greek diasporic literature?⁸ Does it pertain only to works written in Greek? This is a difficult question, since for much of the 20th century, the study of literature was organized around national literatures written predominantly in one language. How about those Greek writers who never were part of the Diaspora, but wrote extensively about it?⁹ Their work could also be referenced when attempting to examine the Greek diasporic experience.

⁷ Ioannis Hassiotis, *Episkopisi tis Istorias tis Neoellinikis Diasporas* [Review of the History of the Greek Diaspora]. Thessaloniki: Vantias, 1993, *passim*.

⁸ *Migrant Literature* is a related term and is generally defined as writings by and to a lesser extent about migrants. Although any personal experience of migration would qualify an author to be classed under migrant literature, the main focus of recent research has been on the principal channels of mass-migration in the twentieth century. These include: European migration to North America or Australia; migration from former colonies to Europe (Black British literature, British-Asian literature, French Beur literature); literature in the context of guest worker programmes (Turks, Italians or Greeks in Germany and Holland); exile literature, such as that of exiled German dissidents during the Nazi period.

⁹ Alexandros Papadiamantis, one of Greece's most influential 19th century novelists and short-story writers never lived outside of Greece; his first novel *I Metanastis* [in Greek: *The Emigrant*] was set in Marseille and Smyrna in the early 18th century.

Within the scope of this presentation, the authors that will be cited are those who either lived abroad for a very long time or belong to that large group of people claiming Greek descent, also known as the hyphenated Greeks (Greek-Americans, Greek-Australians, etc.). Their work was either written in a language other than Greek or was quickly translated into another language. Exploring their writings will support the hypothesis of the presence of a mixed type of a diaspora in the Greek case, including victim, trade, labour and cultural diasporic sub-groups.

Table 2: The Greek Diaspora as a result of forced migrations (Victim Diaspora)

Historical Event	Period	Population Migration	Destination
Russian-Turkish Wars (1769-1774, 1828-29); Crimean War (1853-56); Young Turk movement.	Late 18 th century, 19 th century through 1922	Creation of a large Pontian Greek diaspora, dispersed along the whole coast of the Black Sea as a result of mass migration from the north-eastern Ottoman Empire.	Coastal Georgia, southern Russia, the Ukraine.
The Massacre of Chios	1822	The island numbered more than 100.000. Nearly half were brutally slaughtered; women and children were sold as slaves. Nearly 20.000 managed to flee.	Syros island, Egypt, Marseille, London, Trieste, Livorno.
Asia Minor Catastrophe –the destruction of Smyrna	1922	Tens of thousands of refugees with Ottoman passports migrate, including Aristotle Onassis and Elia Kazan.	U.S.A. Egypt, Australia, Latin America
Greek Civil War	1946-49	Mass exodus of political refugees, including many young children. A small number of scholars and intelligentsia escape to France.	Former Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.

Dictatorship in Greece	1967-74	Scholars, professors, students and intelligentsia flee to the West.	France, Canada, U.S.A., U.K., Sweden
Turkish invasion of the island of Cyprus	1974	Greek Cypriot refugees flee the island, as Turkish troops occupy 37% of the island.	Great Britain, U.S.A., Australia, Republic of South Africa.

Victim Diaspora

For those not familiar with 20th-century Greek history, it is important to understand that in 1923, soon after WWI, the League of Nations decided on a massive population exchange between Greece and Turkey: About 1.5 million Greeks and close to half a million Muslims were moved from one side of the international border to the other. Many of the refugees from Asia Minor later left Greece and formed one of the global sub-groups of the victim diaspora. Thus came the violent end to the Greek presence in Asia Minor after almost 3 millennia of continuous history. The cultural production focusing on the plight of Asia Minor and Pontic Greeks represents a unique type of homeland connection of a group with personal memories of a collective trauma; its uniqueness lies in the fact that this diasporic group came from localities that are not part of Greek territory today. Outside of Greece, few historians have ever acknowledged this victim diaspora.

Historians have traditionally not engaged with literature. This is constantly changing, however, and the interpretation of texts for the study of history is now an acceptable methodological approach. The following is an example of how a single book of literature can influence the way in which historical truth is reinstated: In 2007, the International Association of Genocide Scholars, an organization of the world's foremost experts on genocide, passed a resolution affirming that the 1914-1923 massacres and death marches of Ottoman Greeks were "genocide". Numerous similar resolutions have been passed by various US governors,¹⁰ including that by New York Governor George Pataki, on 19 May, 2002. He proclaimed, among other things:

... *Whereas* the perpetrators of genocide in Asia Minor were notably brutal when executing their campaign to displace Greeks, Armenians and Assyrians from their

¹⁰ Other US States that have passed similar resolutions include New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Georgia, Rhode Island and Florida.

ancestral lands and widely noticed, but largely unchecked by the world community; the celebrated book, “Not Even My Name”, is one of the few English-language accounts of the Pontian Genocide and conveys a touching story of perseverance, triumph and healing, and this publication makes an important contribution to documented reports that clarify our understanding of this dark chapter in history.

The book Governor Pataki referred to was not a history book, but the moving memoir of Sano Halo written by her daughter, Thea Halo, a New York artist of Pontian Greek and Assyrian descent. This influential book has been translated into several languages and is now being taught in many high schools and universities around the USA for a variety of subjects including genocide studies, women's studies, the art of memoir, social studies, European and Asia Minor history, immigration studies, tolerance studies, etc. Halo's literary contribution was pivotal in furthering research by genocide scholars and as internationally renowned genocide scholar Adam Jones mentions, “[Thea Halo is someone] who has also drawn attention to the suffering of Christian and Assyrian Christians [during the period of the Armenian genocide].”¹¹

Most of the world is familiar with Elia Kazan's work, both in literature and film. I don't believe very many of us, though, realize how much of his Greek background -that of an immigrant boy who fled persecution and made it good in the West- is apparent in his work. Kazan, who was born Elias Kazanjoglou in Constantinople in 1909, wrote quite a number of semi-autobiographical novels such as *America, America* (1961), *The Arrangement* (1967), *The Understudy* (1974), *Act of Love* (1978) and *The Anatolian* (1982) as well as an autobiography, *Elia Kazan: A Life* (1988). Kazan's search for his Greek roots is most apparent in *America, America* and *The Anatolian*.

Kazan and Halo are just two of many whose families originated from Asia Minor and established themselves in other countries apart from Greece.¹² Lesser known to the greater public is another writer, Stratis Haviaras, the son of Asia Minor refugees, who was raised in Greece and emigrated to the United States in 1967. He is best known for two novels, *When the Tree Sings* and *The Heroic Age* (1979, 1984), both of which earned a great deal of praise, were originally written in English and were translated into several European languages. As one reviewer wrote: “It is unusual for a writer who has established a reputation in his or her native language to abandon it, learn a new language, and essentially start all over again.”¹³

¹¹ Adam Jones, *Genocide-A Comprehensive Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 106.

¹² Aristotle Onassis, perhaps the most famous Greek of the 20th century, was also born to a family of merchants in Smyrna, and ended up in Argentina where he began a tobacco business.

¹³ <http://www.librarything.com/work/375798/reviews/>

Haviaras' writings shed light not only on the Asia Minor Catastrophe (as it is referred to in Greek), but mainly on the Nazi occupation of Greece during WWII and the Greek Civil War. This bloody civil war (1946-49) ended with a large number of political exiles fleeing to Eastern Europe. There was considerable literary and semi-literary output produced by the Greek political exiles in Eastern Europe, as they searched to negotiate the trauma of their political defeat and exile. Literature professor Venetia Apostolidou refers to 249 novels published by the Greek communist party before 1968. 37% of these were written by political refugees in Eastern Europe.¹⁴ Those translated into English include *The End of our Small Town* by Dimitris Hatzis and *Achilles' Fiancée* by Alki Zei. Eleni is the main character of Zei's novel; she is "Achilles' Fiancée," fiancée of the guerrilla leader, the brave, handsome captain whose code-name is Achilles; she experiences the demonstrations against the German occupiers of Greece, imprisonment where she waits for a death sentence during the post-war persecution of suspected leftists, exile in Tashkent [of Uzbekistan] where the exiled Greek communists fight amongst themselves, and she finally finds herself in Paris. Eleni personifies just one of the many members of yet another victim diaspora cluster.

Labour Diaspora

The Greeks did not only leave Greece or Asia Minor because of war or persecution. As a matter of fact, during the late 19th century and for the greater part of the 20th century, most of them simply left in search of work. The first large migratory wave from Greece was recorded between 1900-1924, when nearly 500,000 Greeks (7% of the total population) crossed the Atlantic Ocean and settled in the United States. Over 60% of them were workers.¹⁵ When the United States established quotas drastically reducing Greek immigration, the migrants turned to other destinations. Following WWII, bilateral labour agreements were signed between Greece and countries like France (1954), Belgium (1957), Germany (1960) and Holland (1966); these countries aimed to attract foreign labour in order to achieve economic reconstruction. Between 1955 and 1977, over 1,236,000 Greeks left Greece, half of those settling in Germany as *Gastarbeiter* (or guest workers). Large Greek communities were also established in Australia where the diaspora today numbers approximately 500,000, and in Canada about 300,000.

¹⁴ Venetia Apostolidou, *Trauma kai Mneme: I Pezografia ton politikon prosfigon* [in Greek: *Trauma and Memory: Literature of the Political Refugees*]. Athens: Polis, 2010, p. 10.

¹⁵ Greek National Statistics, 1930.

Greek folk poetry, dealing with the pain caused by migration, provided a great deal of inspiration for the genre known as *ta tragoudia tis xenitias*.¹⁶ Most of these songs cover a period from the 15th to the twentieth centuries, and the suffering they describe is often compared to death itself. During the twentieth century, the folk poetry evolved into the form of popular songs, sung by some of Greece's most famous singers. Stelios Kazantzides, probably the best known Greek singer of that period, has been characterized as the "singer who articulated the pain of the Greek diaspora. [...] The flood of these Greek immigrants, [workers dispersed throughout the globe], carried his voice and his songs of separation around the world, and their children, born in the *xenitia* grew up under the influence of that voice."¹⁷ These songs, many of them written by renowned Greek poets, talked about the hardships endured while working in the coal-mines of Belgium, the factories of Germany and the harsh climate of the Scandinavian countries.

Inevitably, literature, as well as music, became a means of representation for these exiled labour communities. First generation immigrants mostly recounted their tales and adventures in autobiographical novels and poems. They relate the profound sense of loss, of loneliness and anonymity in a foreign place. Longing for Greece is also a major theme. First generation writers wrote about the home they had to leave behind and this yearning for home was quite intense. Most of these writers never reached a very wide audience.

However, some Greek writers of the 2nd and 3rd generations gained a recognition that extended beyond the limited scope of a Greek community. The most well-known of these writers in the United States is Harry Mark Petrakis.

Harry Mark Petrakis' parents, Mark and Stella Petrakis, emigrated to America from the Greek island of Crete in 1916. Their son Haralambos was born in St. Louis in 1923, the fifth of six children, where his father, a Greek Orthodox priest, was serving. Six months later, the family moved to Chicago's South Side, an immigrant, inner-city neighbourhood where Harry grew up. All things Greek, starting from the Halsted Street Greeks in Chicago's Greek Town, figure prominently in Petrakis' eight novels, four collections of short stories, three books of autobiographical essays and two biographies.

"I didn't have an education," one of Petrakis' characters recounts, "and wasn't any smarter or any more ambitious than thousands of other immigrants. I was strong, though, and what I could do was work hard. I

¹⁶ A word not easily translated, *xenitia* refers to the state, or fact, of being in a foreign land.

¹⁷ For a more detailed account on Stelios Kazantzides, see the obituary by Constantine Buhayer in *The Guardian*, 18 September, 2001.

vowed if the Irish immigrant worked fourteen hours a day, I'd work sixteen. If the Italian immigrant worked eighteen hours a day, I'd work twenty. And if the German immigrant worked twenty-two hours a day, I'd work twenty four. That was how I saved money and bought an interest in my first lunchroom."¹⁸

Though Petrakis is known as *the* Greek-American writer, his appeal to an audience that is primarily non-Greek can be attributed to his ability to address universal human feelings. "A big writer" he says, "deals with the big emotions. Love and hate and vengeance are not Polish or Greek or German or Irish."¹⁹ The most famous of his novels is *A Dream of Kings* (1966), set in Chicago, which made it on to the *New York Times* Best Seller List, followed by a *Bantam Books* paperback edition, became a Doubleday Book Club choice, had twelve foreign editions and was made into a motion picture (1969) starring Anthony Quinn and Irene Pappas. Other writers whose works reveal the experiences of Greek working-class diaspora immigrants include Nicholas Gage (USA), Miltiades Papanagnou (Germany), Theodore Kallifatides (Sweden) and Christos Tsiolkas (Australia).

Trade Diaspora

It appears that the Hungarian word for 'merchant' is also the word for 'Greek'. This might come as a surprise to those who probably are not aware of the many Greek merchant communities that existed throughout the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and Central Europe from the 17th century onwards. Of particular interest is the merchant community of Greeks originating from the island of Chios, an island situated very close to the Asia Minor coastline, in the northeastern Aegean. The Chians had been a strong naval power in antiquity. Their prosperity reached new heights during Ottoman Rule largely, but not exclusively, due to the production of the rare mastic gum, produced nowhere else in the world but on the southern parts of the island. Mastic gum was a coveted treat in the Sultan's court, and most especially in his harem. Thus, Chios enjoyed many privileges and was exempt from paying taxes, as opposed to almost all of the rest of Greece. Chian merchant families soon developed networks extending from Odessa to Calcutta, and from London to New Orleans. They

¹⁸ Harry Mark Petrakis, *Tales of the Heart: Dreams and Memories of a Lifetime*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999, p. 127.

¹⁹ Interview. In: *Odyssey: The World of Greece*. Denville: Odyssey Publications, September/October 1999, p. 57-60.

intermarried to maintain control of their financial empires, and though they were scattered throughout the world, they preserved their Greek Orthodox faith and distinct cultural identity.

This considerable Chian diasporic sub-group is clearly evident in a short novella published in 1879. *Loukis Laras*, written by Demetrios Vikelas (or Bikelas as his name was sometimes translated), appeared for the first time as a serial in the prestigious Athenian periodical of the time, *Hestia*, during the early part of 1879. A French translation appeared that very same year, soon followed by German, Italian, Danish, English, Spanish, Serbian, Swedish, Russian and Hungarian translations. Vikelas himself was a member of the Greek diaspora, though he was born in 1835 on the island of Syros, where a large community of Chian merchants thrived. He worked for many years in London and “permanently” established himself in Athens in 1900 at the age of 65. Actually, the story itself is about Loukis Laras, a semi-fictional character most probably based on the Greek merchant in London named Loukas Tzifos. The story is recounted as a personal narrative.

Some excerpts from the book document the presence of this Greek trade diasporic sub-group:

Those of our countrymen who have resided in England will easily recognise the old Chiote²⁰ merchant, who is here concealed under the name of Loukis Laras” [preface by the author]. [...] In the early part of the year 1881, I resided at Smyrna....my master [...] had assured my father that I then knew quite as much as was necessary for a man destined to a business career.²¹ [...] Two or three of our fellow-islanders –the Columbuses of Greek commerce- had about that time pitched their tents in London. Their successes allowed us no rest, and their example fanned the flame of our ambition. [...] My father and I, as in fact all our relations and friends at Smyrna, were devoted heart and soul to our business.²² [...] The Chiotes were an industrious and peace-abiding people; and being prosperous and self-administered, they were the happiest of the Greeks at the time.²³ [...] I was not then the only young Chiote who was striving how to produce a unit out of nothing and how to convert two into four. There were many others, with whom common misfortune and daily intercourse [...] had brought me into contact.²⁴ [...] Under the discipline, and living in such close union, families became strong, and their power was increased by the ties of those intermarriages. Herein lies one of the explanations of the success of Chiotes, not only in management of their municipal affairs before the revolution, but also of their commercial organisation after the destruction of Chios.²⁵

²⁰ The noun “Chiote” was used in this translation, though “Chian” (referring to a person from Chios) is more common.

²¹ Demetrios Vikelas, *Loukis Laras-Reminiscences of a Chiote Merchant during the War of Independence*. London: MacMillan & Co., 1881, p. 1.

²² Vikelas, *Loukis Laras*, p. 3-4.

²³ Vikelas, *Loukis Laras*, p. 28.

²⁴ Vikelas, *Loukis Laras*, p. 168.

²⁵ Vikelas, *Loukis Laras*, p. 170.

Greek merchant communities were not only those made up of Chian Greeks, and historical novels that draw characters and inspiration from these global Greek networks are abundant in Greek literature. Let us not forget that Constantine Cavafy, surely one of the most translated and widely known Greek poets, was born in 1863 in Alexandria and his father was a prosperous importer-exporter who had lived in England in earlier years and had acquired British nationality. Other Greek novelists whose works draw on the Greek merchant communities of the 19th and early-20th centuries include Nikos Themelis, Ioanna Karistianni, Dimitris Stefanakis and Soti Triantafillou.

Cultural Diaspora

According to Cohen's diaspora typology, a cultural diaspora is one where: (a) there is evidence of the cultural retention or affirmation of a specific ethnic identity; (b) there is a literal or symbolic interest in return to the historic homeland; (c) there are cultural artefacts, products and expressions that show cross-influences between the homeland and the destination countries of the diaspora communities; and, lastly (d) ordinary peoples abroad, belonging to this diaspora, behave in ways consistent with the idea of a cultural diaspora in their attitudes, migration patterns and social conduct.²⁶

Let us consider (b): the literal or symbolic interest in a return to the historic homeland. The return to the ancestral home may appear as an imaginary voyage in diasporic fiction, or may take the form of a personal narrative. Two examples of such return narratives written by Greek Americans are Eleni Gage's *North of Ithaka*²⁷ and Adrianne Kalfopoulou's *Broken Greek*.²⁸ In both of these books, the authors recount their experiences, after returning to the villages of their ancestors. Gage has said:

Like many hyphenated Greeks born abroad to parents with strong attachments to their native land, I grew up hearing the stories my aunts and father told about the remote mountain village where they were born. [...] Beyond tracing my roots and fact-checking my aunts' tall tales, I moved to Greece with a specific purpose—to rebuild my family home, which had lain in ruins for decades.²⁹

Both Gage and Kalfopoulou can be thought of as *transnationals*, this being a group “composed of a growing number of persons who live dual lives: speaking two languages,

²⁶ Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, p. 144.

²⁷ Gage Eleni, *North of Ithaka*. London: Bantam Press, 2004.

²⁸ Adrianne Kalfopoulou, *Broken Greek: A Language to Belong*. Austin: Plain View Press, 2006.

²⁹ Excerpt recorded during Eleni Gage's book presentation at the American Hellenic Institute in Washington on 23 June, 2005, accessed on 20 October, 2011 at www.ahi.org.

having homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contact across national borders.”³⁰

If Gage and Kalfopoulou negotiate the essence of *home* in their narratives, other diaspora writers depict the multiplicity of identity. Jeffrey Eugenides was born in Detroit, Michigan, of Greek and Irish descent. In 2002, his novel *Middlesex* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the Ambassador Book Award. Narrator and protagonist Cal Stephanides (initially called "Callie") is a hermaphrodite with a condition known as 5-alpha-reductase deficiency. Raised through the age of 14 as a girl, Callie runs away and later assumes a male identity as Cal. The protagonist's gender identity conflict could also be interpreted as a diasporic identity conflict. Eugenides sets *Middlesex* in the 20th century constantly interjecting historical events, such as the Balkan Wars, the 'Nation of Islam', and the Watergate scandal. 20th century history is recounted both from an American and a Greek perspective. The narrator admits this dichotomy: "Sorry if I get a little Homeric at times. That's genetic, too."³¹ This "too" is significant: the protagonist seems to be stating "my gender identity issue *is* genetic, but so are other things about me. Genetic, therefore inescapable."

The search for identity is a common theme among writers in the diaspora. Christos Tsiolkas is probably the best-known Greek-Australian author. Tsiolkas' first novel, *Loaded* (1995), was filmed as *Head On* (1998) by director Ana Kokkinos, starring Alex Dimitriades. In 2006, his novel, *Dead Europe*, won *The Age Book of the Year* fiction award. In 2009, his fourth novel, *The Slap*, won the *Commonwealth Writers' Prize* 2009 for best novel in the South-East Asia and South Pacific area and was nominated for the Man Booker Prize for fiction. Tsiolkas is openly homosexual. Being part of a traditional Greek society in the diaspora, Tsiolkas' failure to adhere to mainstream morality and sexuality meant exclusion from the immigrant communal experience. In his work, Tsiolkas highlights the trauma of personal, as well as of national and racial histories.

Conclusion

I have attempted to examine Greek diasporic literature within the context of Cohen's typology of diasporas. As the historical novel is known as "a work that attempts to convey the spirit, manners, and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity to

³⁰ A. Portes, LE Guarnizo & P. Landolt, *The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field*. In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22/2 (1999), p. 217-236.

³¹ Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002, p. 4.

historical fact,” it can be used to further support analysis in the social sciences.³² This methodology could be seen as one more example of the ongoing convergence of the social sciences and the humanities.

When I started researching the Greek diaspora, it quickly became apparent that I was dealing with a diaspora created by migrations of the past. The number of Greeks leaving Greece in search of a better future declined dramatically in the mid-1970s. When Greece entered the European Union in 1981, it really seemed that emigration had become a phenomenon of bygone days. In the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Balkans and the Soviet Union, Greece was faced with a challenge never before experienced in her history: an influx of economic migrants from neighbouring countries, the former USSR, North Africa and the Middle East; 2015 saw a resurgence of this. Today Greece has one of the highest percentages of labour migrants (clandestine or not) within the European Union. The country is still trying to come to terms with the new reality of an emerging multicultural world.

Recently, however, there has been evidence that Greece will once again be faced with the threat of involuntary migration *from* Greece: the collapse of the economy and a soaring unemployment rate (with the young and educated being the hardest-hit segment of the population) mean that many Greeks are once again being forced to leave their country. When the Australian Embassy of Athens organized an event on visa requirements and work permits, the interested parties were in the thousands. Advertisements seeking doctors and other professionals to work in Sweden or Germany are commonplace in the Greek press. Future diaspora scholars will most probably have to analyse the literary production of a new diasporic type - that of the brain-drain diaspora. The diasporic experience, so central to the history of the Greek people since ancient times, almost seems inevitable for this otherwise blessed corner of the earth.

³² From www.britannica.com, retrieved in August 2010.